

PROGRAM DATE: 2018-09-13

PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: DR. DALEEN ALEXANDER – HEAD OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES – DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY – SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT – UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND.

SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
DR. MALKA	Hello, I'm Dr. Amaleya Goneos-Malka, welcome to 'Womanity – Women in Unity'. The show that celebrates prominent and ordinary African Women's milestone achievements in their struggles for liberation, self-emancipation, human rights, democracy, racism, socio-economic class division and gender based violence.
DR. MALKA	Joining us in our Johannesburg studio today is Dr. Daleen Alexander who heads up undergraduate studies at the Department of Psychology – School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her research interests include the impact of gender on people's career trajectories in the workplace, dual career conflict of women from diversity backgrounds, attachment difficulties and the longitudinal impact on people and the impact of having a child with a childhood disorder on the family. Welcome to the show Dr. Alexander!
DR. ALEXANDER	Thank you Doctor.
DR. MALKA	It's a great pleasure to have you here and to begin with could you please share with us a little bit more about some of the work that you do and the responsibilities that come with your role?
DR. ALEXANDER	So I assumed this role from July this year and...
DR. MALKA	...congratulations...
DR. ALEXANDER	...thank you...and at the moment my role is specific to work with the undergraduate affairs but we share the workload, so it's a new model that we've instituted at the Department of Psychology so there's a head of post graduate affairs, the incoming head and I'm the incoming head of the undergraduate affairs. Mostly I deal with students that have challenges, you know, and they want to maybe advance their studies in psychology but they've studied a different trajectory before and I assist them with that but because the three of us work together, we work across, you know, our different roles so we do the workload allocation, we do you know challenges that lecturers experience with students, students experience with lecturers, so we have to work with the human element, we have to work across you know different activities.
DR. MALKA	And within this space what kind of range of subjects fall into the discipline of psychology?
DR. ALEXANDER	So it's quite wide, so we have, if I can look at our professional programmes, we have the organisational psychology, we have clinical psychology, educational psychology and I'm part of the community based counselling psychology and then we have the research psychology programmes and then of course we've got the undergraduate psychology programmes as well.
DR. MALKA	That is a range and psychology touches absolutely every aspect of a person. So you've given us a little bit of context of what you do, moving forwards into the future what is it that you want to achieve; your milestones in this role?
DR. ALEXANDER	Okay. So I am the incoming head and according to this model I'm assuming the headship, so I'm just in a position of you know supporting

	<p>my head of school and the university's agenda of transformation and that is just assisting our students, assisting our...especially our young lecturers, incoming researches, academia and just you know being committed to our academic project in general. For me it's...it has always been you know a striving to become the head of department and I just never thought that I had the time, but at this stage of my life I thought it would be worth it and we are, you know, busy with transformation and I think that I am the first head of department that is, you know, from a diversity background.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>That's a wonderful accomplishment and not only for you as an individual but also as you said, fulfilling the university's transformation agenda. You'd mentioned that your responsibilities encompass research as well as community; as we are a globally connected society, can you expand a little bit on some of the more significant collaborations or research projects that you're doing with counterparts in other universities, be it in South Africa or other countries on the continent?</p>
DR. ALEXANDER	<p>Ja. So one of the highlights of my career was when I attended the Oxford Symposium and where I met like-minded people and it was about family and it was about adolescence and careers and children. So those are things that are very close to my heart, so although my Masters research and PhD research had been in career development, you know, pervasive developmental disorders in children; working with children, have always been very close to my heart so to be there and to collaborate with them and you know they've just extended hands and we're still collaborating. People have just been very, you know, encouraging and engaging and accepting and that has been really one of the collaborations that I've really enjoyed. I work actually across all the universities in South Africa, I've been the external examiner for UJ, the Education Department for UP, Rhodes, you know, so for me....</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>...it's a wonderful network....</p>
DR. ALEXANDER	<p>...ja so it is about networking and ja for me it's more about being a practitioner than a researcher but...and doing, you know, the administrative and that kind of work.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And you do wear this dual hat of both researcher as well as practitioner and your specific interests; you've already mentioned components about family, adolescence, career development and children and with us being a gender based show one of the things that intrigued me was some of your work into the impact of gender on people's career trajectories as well as career conflict experienced by women from diversity backgrounds and considering that in, South Africa, women make up 44% of the workforce, but approximately 80% of the female labour force works in low skilled positions, there's certainly a huge vacuum as you move up the career ladders, particularly in the business world, according to Business Women's Association of South Africa in a 2015 census they did on Johannesburg Stock Exchange listed companies; women only accounted for 29% of executive managers, 21% of directors, 9% of chairpersons and just 2% of CEO's. But yet women represent more than 50% of our population and they're still significantly underrepresented in leadership and managerial roles; what do you think are some of the underlying reasons for underrepresentation of women at the top?</p>
DR. ALEXANDER	<p>It's difficult to explain because of course it's notso we are different, we come from different backgrounds but I'm just thinking of one of my PhD students results now, he's doing his research on the challenges that femaleengineers are experiencing and I'm looking at the result and what has emerged is that socialising actually is one of the prominent features that actually sort of not...that has not</p>

	<p>harnessed people's careers but actually sort of kept them and retracted them from achieving what they wanted to achieve and I think something else that I've noticed that emerged from his research as well is that it is also related to maybe being a gender biased kind of society, especially if you think about the socialising and engineering, so from a very young age the message is being sent and that's actually what the women when they speak, and I look at their verbatim transcripts, that's actually what they say verbatimly that peers and colleagues and females and in their community context they've been told that they are in a man's field, they are not supposed to be doing this kind of job and they say that there are many sort of obstacles and barriers but I'm also mindful of the fact that I think there are internal barriers and there are external barriers.</p>
DR. MALKA	Can you elaborate on them?
DR. ALEXANDER	<p>So the external barriers I think we are all mindful of... we've just watched the recession, you know, the financial barriers so we are mindful of those kind of barriers. I'm a woman from a diverse background, I grew up in a rural background and I know, you know, what it is to struggle and I come from a university like the University of The Western Cape, I know about not being able to have access, you know, to just any university of your choice. But I also know and understand that there are many women that have achieved great strides and even women, if I compare myself to other women, other female academics that are coloured like I am, or black like I am and they have achieved similar or more and I'm thinking that one of my theoretical underpinnings that I strive to use in career development is self-efficacy that is underpinned by Bandura and you knowand Bates; it is about your self-belief as well so if I have an efficacious belief that I am able to do something, so despite the barriers; the obstacles will always be there whether it is at the home-front, whether it is in the community context, the obstacles will be there but it's the internalisation of that process and how we make meaning of it and sometimes it is painful, it...I deal with women in depression due to difficulties that they've experienced at work, you know, in my practice, we see it in the news, in social media. So things are very difficult but I think it's about that internal drive that you need to have despite the challenges and sometimes it can be overwhelming, it can be so difficult, you think that you are reaching your wits end and you're thinking that there's no way that you can actually promote anybody, least of all yourself, but you strive and you continue and you try and empower and you see if you can dig deep and think also about where you're coming from, your reflections, you think about you know role models that you've had, you've seen your mother, you've seen how despite the fact that she's not educated, that she has enabled you and your siblings to be able to get to you know an efficacious standard and you cannot but think then why would I let circumstances deter me from what is my aspiration and what is my ideal and my goal.</p>
DR. MALKA	So it almost sounds as though your aspirations and your internal drive and drawing on the resources and experience at your disposal have got to be bigger than your perception of the blockages that are in front of you.
DR. ALEXANDER	<p>Exactly. So the external factors will always be there and a person can't minimise you know our South African context and our African context because you know the barriers are huge and if we go and do outreaches in Mpumalanga for example and I did a career outreach there, you are amazed at, you know, how children can rise about...above you know these odds and still excel but you have to recognise that they don't have the resources and we have to assist, you know, we have to reach out, we can't</p>

	<p>sort of abdicate our responsibilities but I've always seen that you know my colleagues and other people that just has this, you know, drive, it's like I will not let this deter me, I will rise above my circumstances no matter what, I will. There is a drive, there is that internal drive because there will always be the barriers and the obstacles. The external factors will always be there.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And what you've said I think really resonates from an individual's point of view, these are things that are in your realm of control, your power to do something about this but at the same time, like you said, you've also got these external barriers, so when you're in an environment that has perhaps got a negative perception to you because you don't fit the let's say demographic criteria of the people that are around you; how do you then overcome those types of challenges?</p>
DR. ALEXANDER	<p>It's very difficult to navigate your space but I think it's again about the self-belief and I think a person needs to have support so I am very fortunate that I have always had support. I've had support you know at home from my husband, my children have been very supportive, I've had support at Wits, I've had support you know from my fellow colleagues but I think most of all it is about you know vicarious modelling. So sometimes you don't have a model within your realm, although I do believe that my mother has been a very strong women but because she was not educated she cannot assist me with the challenges that I might be experiencing, you know, in an academic field but there are other, you know...</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>...values...</p>
DR. ALEXANDER	<p>...other values, other model...you know models that I can look up to, role models that I can look up to at Wits, for example, and people that can inspire you. I'm so amazed at our students, for example our master students, the students in community based counselling psychology, they do community psychology and they have to do outreaches, so on Saturday they are doing a graduation for an outreach that they have done with the youth in Westbury and they've asked me to come and be one of the guest speakers because I taught in that community as well, I was a teacher and they see me...and I was just thinking; it's so amazing that a person at this age can be in the stage of generativity (as Ericson calls it) and you can you know at this stage be a role model for somebody else as well because you know sometimes we lack it. I think with this intervention; this study that I did in Mpumalanga it was so obvious when we analysed and we tried to elicit the themes that children didn't see their family as role models, they also didn't see any other role models, not even...they didn't have the mindfulness to see their educators as role models; they were looking at celebrities as their role models and I was just thinking that, you know, we need to be able to, you know, conscientise them and make them aware of that there can be role models that are in your community, in your home. It can be your sister, your sibling, your mother, you know, values that they're standing, it doesn't necessarily have to be, you know, all the people on the platforms, it can be something that they value and stand for that you can simulate.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Role modelling is a really important function, sources of influence, looking at the way that individuals see themselves, especially for women and I think as in opportunities of being able to sort of take elements that you can emulate and then start to live those values or look at the aspirations that these people have strived for and achieved and also I think it matters in the way that men perceive women too. How do you see building female leadership capabilities and mentoring future women leaders?</p>

DR. ALEXANDER	I think it has always been something that has been close to my heart, so it depends on you know the opportunity that arises, so if you have a big project that is good, but if you can just do it with say for example students that I have for clinical supervision or I am a tutor co-ordinator for a group of young women so I instil values in them about you know punctuality, I instil values in them in terms of peer respect and you know valuing each other's opinion and just striving you know for those ideals and aspirations. I always motivate them because they are honour students, I motivate them to apply for masters and some will think that they are not strong enough, they are not articulate enough, you know, it can be difficult because language can always be a barrier and it's just about instilling in them, just like I would have done with my own children, you know, the efficacy that you are able to do it. So whether you do it in a smaller platform, whether you scaffold it for them, whether you do a big project, you know, it is about being the role model and assisting them vicariously to be able to you know strive and believe that they are able to achieve these things.
DR. MALKA	And with the work that you've done, have you developed an efficacy, a self-efficacy toolkit?
DR. ALEXANDER	I've developed a programme....
DR. MALKA	...yes?...
DR. ALEXANDER	...yes, so I've seen ways that we can apply it and I have done it at the Wits Business School Centre for Entrepreneurship, with women, that was one of the highlights of my career, just to be able to see how the women have grown through, you know, this programme and looking at them just focusing on self-awareness, looking at them through focusing on their life stage because you know people would say at my age you are sort of at the end of your career, do you have any ideals still, do you have aspirations? Of course I have. I believe that within the post-modern reflection of career trajectories that we don't retire anymore, it's not like it used to be.
DR. MALKA	And I heard a wonderful thing today, someone was talking about turning forty and realising that it's not a stage of when I get to xyz then I can say I've made it, he said it's like you're going up this mountain and there is no mountaintop. Life ...life keeps going on....
DR. ALEXANDER	...yes, yes, yes...and that's so awesome....
DR. MALKA	...I think that's also really important here in the work that you're doing is the fact that it doesn't stop, we can change our trajectories, but we go on.
DR. ALEXANDER	Yes, exactly, so it doesn't have to stop at a specific time; so now it's retirement and now you, you know, you just sort of hang up your....
DR. MALKA	...and I think that also speaks to our earlier conversation on these almost self-limiting ideals, where we box ourselves into things and that reduces self-efficacy.
DR. ALEXANDER	Yes, exactly, so it is about that, about enhancing rather than boxing yourself in with self-limiting beliefs, ja.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Dr. Daleen Alexander who heads up the undergraduate department at the Department of Psychology – The School of Human and Community Development at the University of The Witwatersrand.
DR. MALKA	You are listening to 'Womanity – Women in Unity' on Channel Africa, the African perspective, on frequency 9625 KHz on the 31 meter band, also available on DSTV, Channel 802. Today we're talking to Dr. Daleen Alexander who heads up undergraduate department at the Department of Psychology – The School of Human and Community Development at the

	University of The Witwatersrand.
DR. MALKA	Dr. Alexander one of the questions that I wanted to ask you and given that we've been talking about gender in the previous discussion and some of the elements that are affecting women in particular, one of the most challenging components concerns....concerning women is about workload distribution and managing their work life balance with their career development. You're a successful career woman who's managed to juggle both being a practitioner and a researcher in the academic space; what's your perspective on this and is there a one-fit solution?
DR. ALEXANDER	I think will be very difficult to have a one-fit solution because I think people's career trajectories are so different; the dual career life is so different and I think home circumstances are so different. One of my honour students did a research project on single mothers raising their adolescent children and one of their most difficult situations that they were trying to navigate was being there and having time, spending time, quality time with their children and being able to protect them from circumstances and influences and peer influences around them and all of them felt that they were not raising their children in the traditional way; like according to Baumrind's you know authoritarian style, they tried to learn from that style that their parents inflicting on them and they were more authoritative but they still felt that they didn't have enough time and most of them were domestic workers but they felt that they tried to inculcate values; they tried to use the time that they have available. They said for example when I come home in the afternoon or the evening I would lay down on the bed and you know just spend some time with my child or I would try and assist them with their homework, I don't sometimes understand the homework but I would do that. So I think from an academic perspective the dual career life has always been a challenge; it has been researched, I think over-researched and nobody has come to any conclusive evidence that there is a particular model that you can follow because our home circumstances are so challenging. In South Africa we have mostly single female headed households and it is difficult to be able to financially support your home and to be there for your family and you have extended family. A lot of the young people that I interact with speak about being community minded, so you don't study just for yourself, you study so that you are able to help your community, you are able to help your family; you are able to help the whole extended family.
DR. MALKA	And in those scenarios do you also consider that the community is taking on some of the parental responsibilities?
DR. ALEXANDER	Responsibilities, ja, and I think from a sort of a westernised perspective we tend to view an extended family as cumbersome but it has so many benefits. If I think about my own challenges that I experienced when I gave birth to my children, they were not insurmountable because my mother-in-law was there; my mother came to support me, so you know an extended household can actually be very helpful. So these single mothers that don't have that support, of course it's more difficult for them and that's what this study actually indicated and there's always the intersection of you know race, class, gender that will impact on a person's dual career life.
DR. MALKA	Very important points and the emphasis I think here is on community, when our earlier conversation it was a lot on the individual and bringing yourself up but now we're really talking about the....let's say the supporting factors or enabling.....

DR. ALEXANDER	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...factors...
DR. ALEXANDER	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...that help you and community is certainly one of them.
DR. ALEXANDER	Yes, it's empowering.
DR. MALKA	Now turning towards more of a personal perspective; one of the questions that I ask all of our guests who've reached tremendous achievements in their respective career trajectories is about some of the factors that they consider have contributed to their success. So some people speak about hard work or a particular person that contributed to their upbringing or perseverance; in your opinion what have been some of the key drivers that have enabled you?
DR. ALEXANDER	I think coming from a rural background and as I said before it was not you know the easiest background and also an Afrikaans speaking background so you must keep all these sort of variables in mind when you think about this rural Afrikaans speaking woman lecturing at Wits University; it's a challenge. But if I think back, what inspired me is that I always wanted to rise above what was limiting or what others thought was limiting to me. So if anybody said that I couldn't do it then that would be my motivating factor, something that also...what really inspired me and drove me was the birth of my children, so just being able to have these two wonderful beings that I needed to be an example to, that I needed to raise, that I needed to know that I'm responsible for; I could never get myself to you know give up so whatever the obstacle or the barrier, it was almost that if I just look at them or see them or know about them and their future and you know what I think and know that they can achieve, it was you can't give up. There's no way that you can give up, you have to carry on; it's a driver. Something that also stands out for me you know is working with children with learning disabilities, so that's what I did in my early career life and I assisted with the establishment of a school, it's called Goudveld Special School, just during a time, that was during apartheid where we didn't have schools for children from black and coloured backgrounds and I worked with the community to establish this school. I also worked at the Carl Sithole Centre in Soweto, worked with the principal; hard work to be able to also assist them with the establishment of Bethany Special School there. Coronationville Training Centre, it's a training centre for children with severe learning disabilities, you know, to be able to help communities and people that are not able to assist themselves or help themselves, those are drivers, you know, motivating factors that will always propel me to continue and to go beyond and to almost, ja, despite barriers be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel.
DR. MALKA	Children seem to be a very strong motivator for you, whether your own children or other children and lifting them up so that they can move ahead. Could you tell us a few of the pivotal moments in your life growing up? You mentioned that you came from a rural background, Afrikaans speaking, what were some of the key points in your life growing up?
DR. ALEXANDER	Growing up I think one of the great moments was being a mediator, so when I was invited back in 1974 for our reunion and I just understood how many people actually looked up to me, you know, my friends and that I actually had such wonderful friends, you know, a person doesn't realise

	<p>because your life moves on and it moves on so quickly, that I had such strong bonds, that I had such lovely friends and that I didn't realise that I was like the mediator between different groups so my best friends were in a particular sector and then all other sectors I managed to mediate and move between all those kind of groups. So those are the things that I look back at and that was quite instrumental in my life. Something that was also very instrumental, I think and was difficult, is that my father had to leave us when I was about I think six/seven because he couldn't find work, he was a builder and he became a migrant labourer and from henceforth my mother was a single parent so she had to raise myself and my siblings alone and she was just so strong, she was just so able to do this with minimal I think support but what also stands out for me is that you know when I do these research studies with adolescents and career development, what I see is that we don't recognise the fathers; I know this is a gender based programme and we're looking at you know different perspectives but what I think we don't acknowledge enough is the contribution of fathers. So we speak about the absent fathers and we recognise it and I definitely felt the absence of my father but I think what I was also grateful for is that he was able to financially provide so that my mother could do...so that she could fulfil the other responsibilities.</p>
DR. MALKA	So despite being absent he still managed to play a role with the...from the financial contribution which would have reduced the burden on your mother to have to fulfil that need as well.
DR. ALEXANDER	Yes.
DR.MALKA	And lastly, because we're running out of time, as we close out the show today could you please share a few words of inspiration that you'd like to impart to young ladies listening to us on the continent?
	It's just about believing in yourself, believing that whatever the you know constraints are around you, that you have the internal drive, that you have the motivation, that you have the efficacy, that you can rise above the circumstances and that I think we have our goals and aspirations and sometimes external factors can come and it can try and detract us from those goals but keep focused, keep looking ahead and yes, I believe that you will be able to rise and you will be able to achieve what you set your mind to.
DR. MALKA	Thank you very much, I really appreciate the sentiment of building on the strength from within, we really appreciate you taking the time out of your day to share some of your insights.
	PROGRAMME END